

Day 4 – On Silence and Solitude

Hosea 6:1-3

*Come, let us return to the Lord.
He has torn us to pieces
but he will heal us;
he has injured us
but he will bind up our wounds.*

*After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will restore us,
that we may live in his presence.*

*Let us acknowledge the Lord;
let us press on to acknowledge him.
As surely as the sun rises,
he will appear;
he will come to us like the winter rains,
like the spring rains that water the earth.*

There have been many hard and painful moments in this last year - for each of us personally, for our church community, for our country, and for our world. If we're honest with ourselves like Hosea was, many of these moments have felt like wounds that God has either allowed to happen or has inflicted on us. I love that God's Word doesn't shy away from recognizing and wrestling with hard questions and painful moments.

When I came across this passage a few days ago, it brought me back to one of the times I felt like this, that God Himself had wounded me. Silly as it sounds, it was a college break-up that taught me the beauty of this passage and "*press[ing] on to acknowledge him.*" In the year following, my senior year, I was deeply wounded, shaken, and depressed. I doubted nearly everything about God and His love for me. I believed I hadn't been "godly enough" for the relationship that ended and so questioned my salvation. But God!

But God was with me in the midst. He orchestrated that I would be in a discipleship class where my assigned homework was the age-old Christian discipline of silence and solitude. Growing up in a Bible church, I'd never experienced this practice, and it was uncomfortable at first. But as the year went on, God met me in the silence, in my own grieving, in my questions, and in my doubts. He didn't speak in an audible voice or a sudden sign, but He listened as I poured out my heart. He pointed me to the reliability of His Word, comforted me with song lyrics, and just let me sit and cry.

It was a hard year, like this last one has been for many of us. But whether it's a year or two or ten:

[H]e will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

He will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

The last week of school, the “spring rains” my soul needed came. I pulled away for some silence and solitude by the creek, and that was the moment Jesus chose to bind up my wounds. As I sat, journaled, cried, and watched the water, He helped me see how my breakup had been a “severe mercy” of love; how He kept me from idolizing a relationship so I could worship Him. He loved me enough to allow something that would hurt me so that I could know Him as the Only One who satisfies and brings peace. He brought me to the desert of doubt, not to leave me there, but to address my doubts and bring me peace. In that moment, I saw how incomparably precious and beautiful Christ was and had become to me.

So whether this past year has been okay or hard or impossibly difficult, press into it, so you can “press on to acknowledge Him.” We know that He will come like the rising sun. Despite all the uncertainty of the coming year and all of the pre-existing wounds, we know Christ has already been restored on the third day so that we can find joy in His presence, and in silence and solitude with Him. I highly recommend trying out silence and solitude, away from every person, phone, and distraction - even if only for 10 minutes - to sit in this truth, grieve, and listen to what the Lord has for you. *Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him.*

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotes are taken from the ESV: Study Bible : English Standard Version, Crossway Bible, 2012 online